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Four Centuries of the Panama Canal. By WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON. (New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1906. Pp. xxi, 461.)

Mr. Willis Fletcher Johnson has sought in his large volume to cover comprehensively the history of the Panama Canal and project; to explain in detail the climatic, sanitary, engineering and political questions which the United States is attempting to solve in its present work of canal construction. The first three chapters, comprising fifty pages, are concerned with the history preceding 1850. The following fifty pages bring the narrative down to 1890, or to about the time when the United States government began to interest itself in the project. Then follow 175 pages, giving in much detail the story of the adoption of the Panama route by the United States government, the establishment of the republic of Panama, and the acquisition, by the United States from Panama, of the right to construct the waterway. One-third of the book is concerned with an account of the work as it has thus far progressed.

The reader of the volume will hardly need to be told that the author is a man whose literary training has been that of a newspaper writer. The narrative is unnecessarily long. Serious students of the canal question will be surprised to find that the volume contains very few references to the many authorities from which the author must have drawn his information. Those who are acquainted with the admirably complete and concise "History of Interoceanic Projects and Communications," contained in the *Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission, 1899-1901*, will be certain to feel that it is a better history than Mr. Johnson has succeeded in writing. Moreover, the discussion of technical questions in this *Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission* and in the *Report of the Board of Consulting Engineers for the Panama Canal* will certainly be considered superior to that contained in Mr. Johnson's volume.

In view of the fact that the canal is being constructed to aid the commerce and industries of the United States, one can not help wondering that Mr. Johnson did not discuss the relation of the canal to the commercial and industrial progress of the United States. If it be said that such a discussion does not belong to a historical work, the reply must be that the major part of this volume, *Four Centuries of the Panama Canal*, deals with present-day problems. The thorough treatment of the commercial and industrial value of the canal con-

tained in the *Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission, 1899-1901* contains the data for as full a discussion of that subject as any author might desire.

Throughout the work unlimited praise is bestowed upon Secretary Taft. Everybody will agree with the author that the able secretary of war is entitled to great praise. By giving such prominence to the services of the secretary of war, the highly important work of the distinguished engineers who located the canal, who worked out the plan for the construction of the great waterway, and who inaugurated the immense task of executing the project, has not received its merited measure of praise.

EMORY R. JOHNSON.

La constitution juridique de l'empire colonial britannique. Par H. SPEYER. (Paris: Arthur Rousseau. 1906. Pp. viii and 337.)

The study of the details of British colonial administration by continental writers is always instructive, not only because of their point of view but likewise by reason of their freedom from local bias. The present volume, which forms a valuable contribution to this discussion, is no exception to the rule. The author, who is a member of the law faculty of the University of Brussels, is as clear in statement as he is simple in diction; throughout, he adheres strictly to a preconceived plan in which every point is rigorously assigned to its proper place.

Prefaced by a brief bibliography, the work is divided into seven chapters; the first consists of a geographical introduction comprising a short historical and statistical review of the various groups of dependencies; two chapters are then devoted to an account of their political organization; attention is here directed to the methods of executive, legislative and financial control; the fourth chapter reviews the historical evolution of the three forms of government designated by the author as "the administrative," "the representative" and "the parliamentary." The story of the rise of colonial federation in Canada, Australia and South Africa is then briefly narrated. The sixth chapter, sketching the development of jurisprudence and private law in the several parts of the British Empire, while belonging perhaps more properly to the domain of law than to that of political economy, is especially interesting by reason of its comparative